DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 467 550 PS 030 482

AUTHOR	Rolfe, Sharne A.
TITLE	Promoting Resilience in Children.
INSTITUTION	Australian Early Childhood Association, Inc., Watson.
ISBN	ISBN-1-875890-564
ISSN	ISSN-1440-5148
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	25p.; Theme issue. Published quarterly.
AVAILABLE FROM	Australian Early Childhood Association, Inc., P.O. Box 105 Watson, ACT 2602, Australia. Tel: 02-6241-6900; Fax: 02-6241-5547; e-mail: publishing@aeca.org.au; Web site: http://www.aeca.org.au.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
JOURNAL CIT	AECA Research in Practice Series; v9 n2 2002
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Child Relationship; Attachment Behavior; Caregiver Child Relationship; Caregiver Role; Child Behavior; *Children; *Coping; *Emotional Adjustment; Emotional Development; Learning Experience; *Resilience (Personality); Stress Management

ABSTRACT

This booklet invites reflection on ways in which childhood resilience can be promoted, thereby helping children to adapt effectively in the face of adversity. The attributes of resilient children are described, as is the importance of protective factors in building or promoting resilience. The booklet discusses the complex interplay between risk and resilience in children's lives and focuses on ways adults can nurture resilience: (1) through secure relationships with children; (2) through learning experiences that promote self-efficacy and respect for self and others, and defend just and equitable outcomes for all; and (3) by supporting parents and other carers of the child in their caregiving roles. In a final section, the booklet encourages self-reflection by professionals on their own resilience, self-acceptance, and adult attachment needs, noting that these can all affect interactions and relationships with children and their families, and ultimately, therefore, the resilience of children themselves. (Contains 18 references and a list of further reading.) (EV)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

Promoting Resilience in Children

ED 467 550

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D. de Silva

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Sharne A. Rolfe

PS 030482

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

About AECA

The Australian Early Childhood Association Inc. (AECA) actively promotes the provision of high quality services for all young children from birth to eight years and their families, and supports the important role of parents. AECA is also the national umbrella organisation for children's services.

AECA is a leading specialist publisher of early childhood literature.

About RIPS

The AECA Research in Practice Series is published four times each year by the Australian Early Childhood Association.

The series aims to provide practical, easy to read, up-to-date information and support to a growing national readership of early childhood workers. The books bring together the best information available on wide ranging topics and are an ideal resource for children's services workers and others interested in the care and education of young children. Books produced in previous years have now become standard texts in many early childhood courses.

Invitation to Authors

If you are interested in writing for the AECA Research in Practice Series or any other AECA publication, please contact the Publications Section of AECA for further information on the preparation of manuscripts and for a copy of the Guidelines for Contributors.

Edition Editor

Pam Linke

Production Editor

Penelope Craswell

Graphic Designer

Anne Evans

Publications Officer

Amanda Mason

Publications Assistant

Jenny Sawer

Photos

Anne Evans, Rhonda Milner, Judy Tempest; courtesy Sharne A. Rolfe

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the children of Gujaga Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Service/Lady Gowrie, and all the children and adults who appear in the photographs.

Contact details

Publications Section
Australian Early Childhood Association
PO Box 105 Watson ACT 2602
Tel: (02) 6241 6900
Fax: (02) 6241 5547
Email: publishing@aeca.org.au

© Copyright 2002

All rights reserved by the Australian Early Childhood Association Inc.

Material herein must not be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the Association

Registered for posting as a publication—
PP232100/00036
ISSN 1440-5148
ISBN 1 875890 564

Printed by Goanna Print, Canberra

Promoting Resilience in Children

Sharne A. Rolfe

Contents

Introduction: What is resilience? 1

What attributes do resilient people have? 3

Early research: 'Protective factors' in action 4

Recent research: New ways of thinking about resilience 5

Protective factors in early childhood and what you can do 8

Self-reflection: Understanding one's own feelings and attachment needs 15

References 17

Further reading 18

About the author

Dr Sharne Rolfe is a Psychologist and Senior Lecturer in early childhood development at the University of Melbourne and a member of the newly-formed Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC) in the Department of Learning and Educational Development. Her clinical and research interests focus on early relationships, attachment, child abuse and the development of resilience in children. Among her recent publications is a jointly-edited international text on research methods in early childhood (MacNaughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blachford, 2001).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

5

Introduction: What is resilience?

A generally agreed goal for all children is to be able to cope well with the inevitable ups and downs of life. We want children who can face challenges confidently, deal with problems optimistically, and who can make the most of change. All these call for *resilience*, a mechanism or process that helps to protect individuals from the negative psychological effects of adverse experiences and other risk factors. Being resilient means being *resistant to stress*.

Resilience is not something we are born with. Some children have temperaments that help them approach the world in a positive way. But mostly we *become resilient* through particular kinds of experiences and relationships. The sorts of experiences and the kinds of relationships that really count are those promoting feelings of security, self-efficacy, optimism and coping skills during infancy and the childhood years.

This book invites readers to reflect on ways in which they can promote childhood resilience and thereby help children 'to adapt effectively in the face of adversity' (Berk, 2000, p. 10).

In everyday life, children face change and challenge in many forms; from minor disappointments and hassles through to more major events like the birth of a sibling, moving house, or making the transition to a new child care centre, preschool or teacher. Some children experience major adversity that may be short-lived or may be chronic. This includes poverty, exposure to abuse, neglect, domestic violence, parental psychiatric illness, parental substance abuse, natural disasters such as floods and famine, war, or loss of loved ones. Sometimes exposure to trauma is first-hand. Sometimes it comes into children's lives via media portrayals of events far away. Rarely does adversity involve a single or isolated stressful life event. More often multiple stressors are present. The more risk factors or stressors there are, the harder it is for children to be resilient.

This book describes the attributes of resilient children and the importance of 'protective factors' in building or promoting resilience. It discusses the complex interplay between risk and

Resilient people can remain committed to a cause or course of action, even if they face many challenges and obstacles along the way

resilience in children's lives and focuses on ways adults can nurture resilience:

- through *secure relationships* with children;
- through *learning experiences* that promote self-efficacy and respect for self and others, and defend just and equitable outcomes for all; and
- by *supporting parents and other carers* of the child in their caregiving roles.

In a final section, this book encourages *self reflection by professionals* on their own resilience, self-acceptance and adult attachment needs. These can all impact on interactions and relationships with children and their families, and ultimately therefore, on the resilience of children themselves.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

What attributes do resilient people have?

Resilient people have a positive outlook on life and remain hopeful and purposeful, even when the going is tough. They can seek the help of others and find support and solace through significant relationships in times of need. They have self-respect and a strong sense of self-worth. They can remain committed to a cause or course of action, even if they face many challenges and obstacles along the way.

Signs of emerging resilience can be seen as early as infancy. Six-month-olds who cry lustily to express hunger, or protest strongly when frustrated or angry, are showing that they expect a response and that they are developing a sense of their own agency and ability to impact on their world. Two-year-olds who assert their independence with confidence, who persist in the face of challenge, and who can turn to significant adults for comfort and support when needed are showing they have a developing sense of trust in themselves and others. Four- and five-year-olds who tackle new learning tasks with curiosity, wonder and energy, and who explore new relationships with confidence or challenge traditional gender-based roles during play (see MacNaughton, 1998), are showing optimism at work.

Early research: 'Protective factors' in action

One of the better-known studies of resilience was conducted on the Hawaiian island of Kuaui over a period of more than 40 years, beginning in the mid-1950s (see Werner & Smith, 1992). There were nearly 700 children in the original sample. The study set out to examine long-term consequences of prenatal and perinatal risk factors and to study how stressful early experiences impact on cognitive, emotional and physical development.

The aim of the study was to focus on the negative effects of risk factors. However, over time, the researchers became particularly interested in those individuals who were classified as high-risk (including being exposed to parental mental illness, parental alcohol abuse, family breakdown and poverty), but who nonetheless developed into adults who 'loved well, worked well and played well' (Werner, 1989, p. 4).

The researchers found that about 33 per cent of the high-risk sample were resilient in this way and carefully examined the characteristics and life experiences of these individuals. They identified three major features common to them but missing in the lives of those who had developed serious learning or behaviour problems, and those with delinquency records and/or mental health problems. They called these features '*protective factors*'.

The protective factors identified were:

- *childhood temperament*: being active, cuddly, responsive and easy-going in infancy;
- *early relationships*: the opportunity to form a close, positive relationship with at least one family member—although not necessarily the parent—who knew the child well and was committed to that child's wellbeing;
- *community*: outside-family supports that provided the growing child with meaningful opportunities to be involved with others.

The importance of an easy, outgoing temperament is that it appears to elicit positive responses from others and thus facilitates early positive relationship experiences. The importance of at least one secure attachment within the family, or amongst the child's early caregivers, is its pivotal role in the development of trust, security, and later, autonomy and initiative. Outside family supports were identified as important for their role in encouraging and reinforcing feelings of competence in the child and adding an extra dimension of meaning to life, particularly in the later childhood years.

Werner's approach moved away from a deficit model of development (pinpointing risk factors and showing their negative effects), towards a model based on the identification of strengths, protective factors and their precursors.

Recent research: New ways of thinking about resilience

Resilience is culturally defined

Resilience is a complex concept. Coping well with the ups and downs of life may have different meanings from culture to culture. It is important to keep in mind that 'optimal development' and 'positive adaptation' are defined by people according to what is valued in their society or cultural group (see Durbrow, 1999; Masten, 1999).

At least one secure attachment is pivotal in the development of trust, security and later, autonomy and initiative

All children need support in the face of adversity

Some children who appear highly competent despite stressful early life experiences later find it more difficult to cope. O'Dougherty-Wright et al. (1997) found that the long-term effects of exposure to childhood trauma may include depression, even amongst those who appear to cope well at the time. One possibility is that apparent early resilience sometimes masks unresolved emotional pain.

These results warn of the dangers of labelling high-risk children who are functioning well as resilient, especially if this blocks due regard by caregivers for the inner struggles the child experiences in the process of adjusting and coping. In the face of adversity all children need comfort, understanding and opportunities to express their inevitable distress.

A child's development will depend on the balance between risk and resilience at any one time

Even the most secure, autonomous and optimistic child will be vulnerable and lose confidence in the face of major loss or ongoing trauma, such as family breakdown or a death in the family. That is why terms such as 'invincible' are inappropriate as they imply a permanent state of invulnerability that is misleading. Knowing how to recognise when a child is feeling overwhelmed and how to support children in the face of potentially overwhelming stress is very important.

Signs that a child is feeling overwhelmed may include:

- high dependence on the adult caregiver for attention and support, particularly if the child has been relatively independent in the past;
- poor peer relationships, again particularly if this has not usually been the case;
- regression to more immature ways of responding to frustration, distress or anger;
- inability to persist and a tendency to give up without really trying;
- sleeplessness, lack of appetite, bed-wetting, increased self-comforting behaviours;
- apathy, unhappiness, lack of initiative and/or a sense of being 'lost'.

How to help children deal with stress:

- provide extra physical comforting;
- reassure with loving words and gestures and through consistency in normal routines;
- encourage play that helps children express and release tension;
- allow children opportunities to talk with trusted adults about their feelings in a safe and peaceful setting;
- work through your own feelings about the stressful experiences children have and talk about these feelings with someone you trust;
- respect how each family responds to stress and trauma, and work with parents to develop a better understanding of how they cope.

Children (and adults) can be more or less vulnerable, and more or less resilient at different times throughout their lives

Risks can have cumulative effects; so can protective factors. The child's psychological growth will reflect the changing balance in these. High-risk children who cope well with adversity at one stage of their development are not necessarily protected from adversity later. How well a child copes will reflect how long stress lasts, its intensity and nature, and the availability of emotional supports at the time. That is why so many of the strategies to help children cope with adversity are focused on providing extra comfort, in an attempt to reduce stress and increase feelings of support as soon as possible. It is important in times of high stress to achieve a re-balancing for children away from fear and towards feeling safe and protected.

Supportive relationships are more likely to promote resilience the earlier they occur in the child's life and the less disruption there is to them

The timing of particular events and experiences in the life of the child is crucial

In general, the younger the child, the more negative the impact of adversity will be, particularly if it is severe and chronic. Perry et al. (1995) indicate an important reason for this in the experience-dependent nature of brain development in the early years. The development of those parts of the brain that regulate feelings and emotional arousal have been shown to be abnormal if infants and very young children are exposed to extended trauma, such as domestic violence or abuse. This in turn can increase their sensitivity to traumatic events later in life. Supportive relationships are more likely to promote resilience the earlier they occur in the child's life and the less disruption there is to them.

How the child perceives or understands adverse experiences will influence their impact

Most children (and adults) will talk openly about their feelings and experiences only with people they trust. And trusted adults must listen to children's feelings and their interpretations of traumatic events without being judgmental. Each child will have a unique view and specific fears compatible with, and arising from, their particular perceptions. Accepting these fears and identifying and clarifying their understandings will help children reflect on and ultimately resolve their feelings.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Protective factors in early childhood and what you can do

According to Rutter (1990) protective factors (or processes) are those that moderate risk. Promoting resilience means achieving one or more of the following:

- reducing exposure to, or the impact of, risk;
- breaking the cycle of negative effects that usually follow adversity;
- promoting self-esteem and self-efficacy through secure relationships and experiences of success.

Masten (2001) identifies several key factors associated with resilience. These are 'connections to competent and caring adults in the family and community, cognitive and self-regulation skills, positive views of self, and motivation to be effective in the environment' (p. 234). Positive relationships, new opportunities for support and positive new directions in life are all potential protective factors.

Drawing on these frameworks, early childhood educators can promote resilience in three main ways:

- through secure relationships with children;
- through the positive emotional, social and cognitive experiences they provide for children; and
- through the support they provide to others who are responsible for the child's care (e.g. parents and other family members).

Relationships with children that promote resilience

The experience of positive, secure relationships early in life lies at the core of emotional health and wellbeing. Children learn who they are, what they can expect from the world and how people will behave towards them through their earliest relationships with significant attachment figures. They learn about connectedness, belongingness, dignity and opportunity (Seita, Mitchell & Tobin, 1996) through relationships. Relationships also teach children to think of themselves as 'agents'; i.e. whether their actions can or cannot achieve personal goals and what goals they may have for the welfare of others.

Attachment theory alerts us to the importance to children of their so-called 'internal working model' of the world (Bowlby,

1988). This model is the mental representation the child develops of what interactions and relationships are like and will be like in the future. It is based on the way children's earliest caregiving figures have related to them.

Infants who have sensitive, responsive, warm and consistent caregivers develop a view of themselves as lovable and worthy. They come to see the world of people as a place that can be trusted and that generally has their best interests at heart. Such optimism provides the foundation for life-long self-esteem, and coping skills in the face of later relationship disappointments, if and when these occur. Developing a solid foundation of trust and security ideally occurs in the first year or so of life, but children continue to need positive relationships to consolidate this foundation throughout their childhood years.

Honig (1998) has discussed at length the importance of secure attachment relationships for children and how early childhood educators can promote secure attachments with the children they care for. She stresses that early childhood professionals are special caregiving figures for children, even if these children already have secure attachments to their parents or other family members. For children with insecure attachment experiences, the role of early childhood staff is even more crucial. She emphasises the importance of: respecting the individual; loving touches and holding; admiration; accepting of individual differences; careful monitoring; and mastery experiences.

Children can move from less positive to more positive internal working models if the quality of their caregiving becomes more sensitive and responsive, or they have opportunities to experience this kind of care for the first time with a new carer. However, such adjustments are not automatic; they can be problematic and may take a long time to occur, particularly if there have been major disruptions or disturbances in early caregiving experiences (see Chase Stovall & Dozier, 2000). This is because children develop strategies to deal with caregiver insensitivity or inconsistency and then continue to apply these strategies even if they are no longer

needed. For example, children whose emotional needs have often been ignored or rejected may hide their feelings or refuse comfort. This can be confusing or even alienating to a responsive, sensitive carer.

Guidelines for establishing secure relationships with children

Children learn that they can trust a caregiver and thus feel secure in that relationship when that caregiver is *sensitive*, *responsive*, *warm and consistent*.

Being sensitive means being in tune with the infant and young child, i.e. being tuned in to their feelings and signals or cues.

- Schedule uninterrupted time with each child on a one-to-one basis.
- Avoid being distracted by non-child-centred events when with a child.
- Monitor children sufficiently well to be able to see or hear when they signal a need, even in a group.
- Pay careful attention to non-verbal cues about feelings, particularly in younger children or children who are less demanding of attention.
- Understand how children of different ages signal their feelings or need for attention (from infancy through to later preschool years).

Being responsive means being able to respond to children's cues in appropriate ways and to be psychologically available to them. Responsiveness is built on sensitivity.

- Know children well enough to be able to respond in ways that work for them.
- Allow sufficient time to be available as long as needed, even if it means giving undivided attention to that child for an extended period.
- Be patient, gentle, calm, reassuring and clear—even in the face of strong distress, frustration or anger in the child.
- Be prepared to try different strategies and responses if initial responses to the child do not work.

Being warm means to respond to children with honest affection and positive affect. It means feeding back to the child a genuine sense of enjoying the interaction.

- Create an environment where it is both accepted and expected that adults and children will have warm and appropriately intimate interactions and relationships.
- Allow children to sustain physical closeness for as long as they need.
- Allow sufficient time to be physically close to children in ways that nurture their comfort and trust.
- Avoid mechanistic, distracted or rushed behaviour when interacting with children.

Being consistent means to interact with the child in a predictable way; i.e. to have a predictable mood and way of initiating contact and responding to the child. It also means arranging staffing schedules in such a way that children know certain caregivers will be available to them most or much of the time. This is particularly important for the infant or toddler who will be distressed and confused by too much change, undermining feelings of safety and trust.

- Before interacting with children try to achieve a positive and relaxed state of mind.
- Develop professional coping skills to remain calm in the face of the inevitable stresses and frustrations in work with children.
- Organise staffing schedules so that one or two main early childhood practitioners are responsible for the primary care of every infant and toddler.
- Understand the attachment process and that a secure attachment with a professional will not undermine a child's secure attachment to the parents.
- Provide children with age-appropriate limits and boundaries that are applied fairly, calmly and predictably.

Providing experiences for children that promote resilience

Experiences that promote *autonomy, initiative, feelings of self-competence and high self-esteem* are an important part of promoting

resilience. High self-esteem alone is not sufficient to make a child resilient, but healthy self-esteem certainly promotes resilience.

The importance of feelings of autonomy, initiative, competence and self-esteem comes from their ability to promote within children a view of themselves as agents with control over their lives and their destiny. These 'mastery-oriented attributions' affirm that the child is able to exert a positive influence through their own agency (Heyman & Dweck, 1998).

Children who have this important sense of agency tend to be more persistent and optimistic in their activities than those who do not, especially when they encounter the inevitable failures and challenges that must be faced, worked through and overcome on the road to true mastery. They are better equipped in terms of attitude and skills to cope with stressful, difficult situations. This contrasts with children who have developed the view that their own agency has little, if any, impact on what happens to them. They believe it is fate or the whim of others that determines or controls their destiny. They are inclined to give up easily, attribute success to luck or the efforts of others and are pessimistic in their approach.

Guidelines for providing experiences for children that promote resilience

Experiences that enhance feelings of *autonomy* are those that assist the child to develop a sense of being a separate individual, moving towards being able to function independently from the caregiver. According to theorists such as Erikson (1950), the early childhood stage at which children particularly need experiences that promote autonomy is between the ages of one and three years. When children are not given reasonable, age-appropriate choice and opportunities for some independence, or are made to feel ashamed for their emerging need to be an individual, shame and doubt develop.

To enhance autonomy:

- Provide opportunities for children to make choices that are appropriate for their age.
- Allow children to explore and experiment independently while keeping a careful watch over their safety and being available as a secure base when needed.
- Include experiences within the early childhood setting that focus on the unique characteristics of each child and celebrate their diversity.
- Respect the rights of every child to decide whether or not they wish to participate in planned activities.
- Build a program that allows for flexibility in the timing of routines, such as sleeping and meal times, so children do not feel controlled by established routines that do not mesh well with their needs.

Experiences that enhance feelings of *initiative* are those that assist the child to begin to develop feelings of responsibility, appropriate self-control and purpose. Children whose initiative is not encouraged and supported, or who are over-controlled by caregivers, may develop feelings of guilt or inadequacy and give up trying.

To enhance initiative:

- Encourage activities that provide for make-believe play, as it is through fantasy that children most often try out different roles and experiment with the sort of person they can be.
- Support children's attempts to be responsible for tasks that are appropriate to their age.
- Ensure that expectations for individual children, particularly in regard to self-control, are not inappropriately high.
- Ensure that the rules of the early childhood setting are appropriate to the abilities of the children and applied with sensitivity and appropriate flexibility.
- Provide for age-appropriate leadership opportunities for every child.

Experiences that enhance feelings of *self-competence, efficacy* and *self-esteem* are those that help children feel good about themselves, their abilities and their relationships. They give the child a healthy self-image and a strong sense of their own worth.

When they evaluate themselves, these children come up with a realistic appraisal that acknowledges both strengths and weaknesses. More importantly from a resilience perspective, they are able to begin to learn to deal effectively with the criticism, mistakes and failures that are an inevitable part of life.

To enhance self-competence and self-esteem:

Know children well and communicate that you understand and accept them as they are

- Value each child unconditionally and ensure that re-direction of inappropriate behaviour is not a rejection of the child, or an evaluation of her or him as less worthwhile.
- Know children well and communicate that you understand and accept them as they are.
- Provide constructive feedback to children on their behaviour—both appropriate and inappropriate—that is direct, accurate, specific and objective feedback and that avoids any tendency to be derogatory, humiliating, demeaning or value-laden. Always look for the message behind the behaviour.
- Avoid over-protection and, through naturally occurring situations of manageable disappointment or failure, allow children opportunities to experience a range of emotions and assist them to cope with them. Be guided by the child's response.
- Provide many opportunities for challenge at a level that can be mastered by the child with appropriate effort, persistence and support.
- Model self-acceptance and respect for others in ways that will positively influence children.

Promoting resilience by supporting others who care for the child

In order to promote resilience, adults who care for children must be—and must feel—sufficiently supported themselves. Early childhood educators can promote resilience in children indirectly through the way they support the primary carers of the child. This is because supporting parents and other significant people in a child's life maximise the child's opportunities for positive relationships and experiences with them.

Guidelines for promoting resilience by supporting others who care for the child

To support other primary carers of the child, especially parents:

- Develop a partnership with parents through which a good understanding of the child and knowledge and respect for the culture of the family can grow.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Schedule time to be available to parents that allows meaningful, uninterrupted dialogue about the child and any concerns they may have.
- Be willing and able to offer support to parents if requested, and to respectfully accept feedback from parents.
- Develop professional networks that enable parents or other family members to be linked to other community supports and resources if required.
- Develop skills of active listening and be responsive to signs that a family is under stress or not coping.
- Be realistic in terms of expectations of parents to be involved in and contribute to the life of the early childhood setting.

Self-reflection: Understanding one's own feelings and attachment needs

Being responsive and sensitive to children requires a high level of commitment, self-understanding and self-awareness. The balance of supports and stresses in our lives, and our own history of early attachment relationships can each impact on the quality of the relationships we develop.

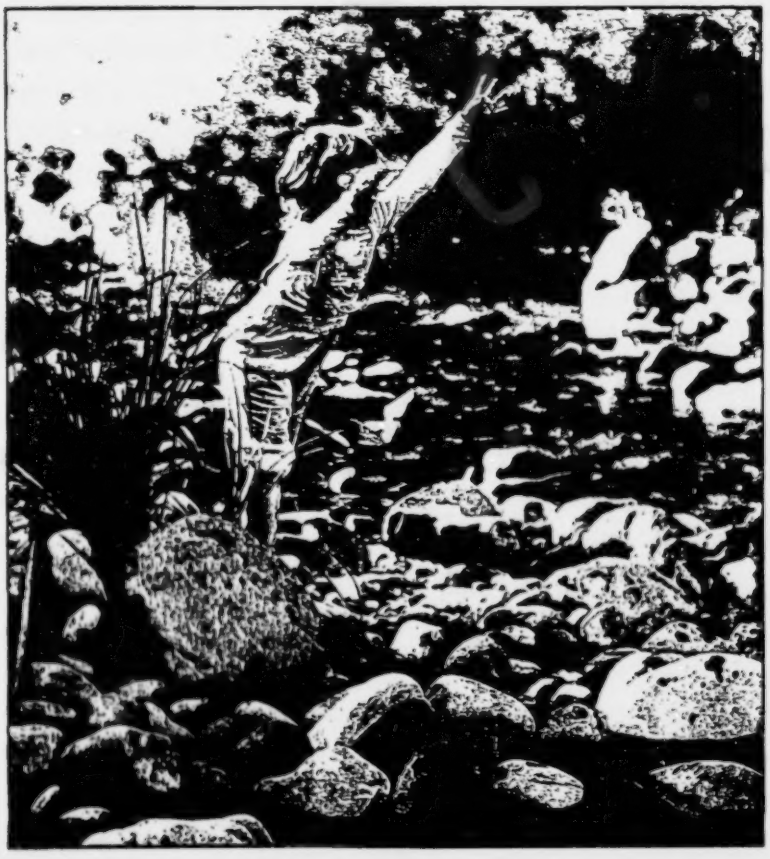
Research by Main and her colleagues (e.g. Hesse, 1999) using the Adult Attachment Interview has identified that some adults tend to be *dismissive* of attachment needs and the importance of attachment experiences. They tend to be emotionally distant, rejecting children when they signal needs for comfort and nurture, particularly if accompanied by distress. Other adults are *preoccupied* and still emotionally entangled with the hurt and disappointments of their early attachment relationships. They tend to be inconsistent—being sometimes available, sometimes psychologically unavailable—in response to children's attachment needs. Finally, so-called *autonomous* adults are realistic, reflective and psychologically resolved in regard to early attachment experiences, even if these were very stressful. Autonomous adults are best able to respond with sensitivity, consistency and warmth to the attachment needs of children and are most likely to have secure attachment relationships with them.

The life experiences of adults who become emotionally autonomous bear many similarities to those of resilient individuals. Autonomous adults may have faced many stresses and much adversity, but they have developed positive coping skills, have addressed and resolved emotional issues and hurts, and have developed a positive outlook on life.

Early childhood educators bring to their work diverse attachment histories, and go through periods in which they are more or less stressed, more or less supported. Honig (1998) wrote:

> *Some of us received more nurturing than others. But all of us can reflect on our own past history. The more you know your limits, your fears, your joys, your abilities to act more maturely in the face of stressors, the more intuitively well will you handle challenges in relating to a particular youngster or in reaching through to create intimacy with a child who is difficult to reach* (p. 29).

Promoting resilience in children begins with self-reflection and self-nurturance. It requires the emotional support of other adults and an ability to seek and accept this support. The inner resources of the adult are the foundation of resilience in the child.



References

Berk, L. E. (2000). *Child development* (5th edn). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Clinical applications of attachment theory*. London: Routledge.

Chase Stovall, C., & Dozier, M. (2000). The development of attachment in new relationships: Single subject analyses for ten foster infants. *Development and Psychopathology, 12*, 133–156.

Durbrow, E. H. (1999). Cultural processes in child competence: How rural Caribbean parents evaluate their children. In A. S. Masten (Ed.), *Cultural processes in child development: The Minnesota Symposia on Child Psychology* (Vol. 29, pp. 97–121). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Erikson, E. H. (1950). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.

Erikson, E. H. (1992). Memorial Lecture. The theory and practice of resilience. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 35*, 231–258.

Hesse, E. (1999). The adult attachment interview: Historical and current perspectives. In J. Cassidy and P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment*. New York: Guilford.

Heyman, G. D. & Dweck, C. S. (1998). Children's thinking about traits: Implications for judgements of the self and others. *Child Development, 69*, 391–403.

Honig, A. S. (1998, August). Attachment and relationships: Beyond parenting. Paper presented at the Head Start Quality Network Research Satellite Conference, East Lansing, MI.

MacNaughton, G. (1998). Even pink tents have glass ceilings: Crossing the gender boundaries in pretend play. In E. Dau (Ed.), *Child's play: Revisiting play in early childhood settings*. Sydney: Maclennan and Petty.

Masten, A. S. (1999). Resilience comes of age: Reflections on the past and outlook for the next generation of research. In M. D. Glantz & J. L. Johnson (Eds.), *Resilience and development: Positive life adaptations*. New York: Plenum.

Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist, 56*(3), 227–238.

O'Dougherty-Wright, M., Masten, A. S., Northwood, A., & Hubbard, J. J. (1997). Long-term effects of massive trauma: Developmental and psychobiological perspectives. In D. Cicchetti & S. L. Toth (Eds.), *Rochester Symposium on Developmental Psychopathology: Volume 8. Developmental perspectives on trauma* (pp. 181–225). Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.

Perry, B. D., Pollard, R. A., Blakley, T. L., Baker, W. L., & Vigilante, D. (1995). Childhood trauma, the neurobiology of adaptation, and 'use-dependent' development of the brain: How 'states' become 'traits'. *Infant Mental Health Journal, 16*, 271–291.

Rutter, M. (1990). Psychosocial resilience and protective mechanisms. In J. Rolf, D. Cicchetti, K. Neuchterlein, & S. Weintraub (Eds.), *Risk and protective factors in the development of psychopathology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Seita, J. M., Mitchell, M., & Tobin, C. (1996). *In whose best interest? One child's odyssey, a nation's responsibility*. Elizabethtown, PA: Continental Press.

Werner, E. (1989). Children of the Garden Island. *Scientific American, 260*, 2–6.

Werner, E., & Smith, R. S. (1992). *Overcoming the odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Further reading

Anthony, E. J., & Cohler, B. J. (1987). *The invulnerable child*. New York: Guilford.

Fonagy, P., Steele, M., Steele, H., Higgitt, A., & Target, M. (1994). The Emanual Miller memorial Lecture 1992. The theory and practice of resilience. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 35*, 231–258.

Glantz, M. D., & Johnson, J. L. (Eds.). (1999). *Resilience and development: Positive life adaptations*. New York: Plenum.

Howard, S., Dryden, J., & Johnson, B. (1999). Childhood resilience: Review and critique of literature. *Oxford Review of Education, 25*(3), 307–323.

Luthar, S. S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development, 71*, 543–562.

MacNaughton, G., Rolfe, S., & Siraj-Blatchford, I. (Eds.). (2001). *Doing early childhood research: International perspectives on theory and practice*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

2002 Subscriptions

Research in Practice Series

Yearly (4 issues). Contact AECA for details.
Overseas Subscriptions available.
Special rates available for bulk purchases.

Every Child magazine

Every Child magazine is published four times a year especially for early childhood educators, carers and parents of children from birth to eight years of age. It provides news and features of interest to everyone working with, and interested in, the education, care and development of young children.

Australian Journal of Early Childhood

This quarterly journal features up-to-date articles designed to impart new information and encourage the critical exchange of ideas among practitioners in the early childhood field. AJEC gives the field an indispensable Australian perspective on issues of concern and interest.

Advertising rates

Contact Publications Section for details.

AECA Membership

The Australian Early Childhood Association has branches in every state/territory. All members receive *Every Child* and comprehensive members also receive subscriptions to the Research in Practice Series and the Australian Journal of Early Childhood.

Members participate in the identification of priorities for state and national action, and influence policies concerning young children through publications, conferences and policy development.

Membership, subscription & advertising inquiries:

Australian Early Childhood Association Inc.
PO Box 105 Watson ACT 2602
Tel: (02) 6241 6900 Fax: (02) 6241 5547
Sales line (toll free): 1800 356 900
Email: national@aeca.org.au

Promoting Resilience in Children

What is resilience? Why is it important for children?

In this publication, Sharne Rolfe explains how resilient children find it easier to bounce back from the hard times in life with strength, optimism and self-assurance.

Drawing on research in the field, Rolfe explains that forming secure and caring relationships with children, but also letting them take initiative and be increasingly autonomous, is the best way of helping children to become resilient. This book will assist teachers, carers and parents to understand the concept of resilience and promote resilience in children.

AECA Research in Practice Series
Australian Early Childhood Association Inc.
PO Box 105 Watson ACT 2602
Tel:(02) 6241 6900 Fax:(02) 6241 5547
Email: publishing@aeca.org.au

ISBN 1-875890-56-4

9 781875 890569

Vol. 9 No. 2 2002

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

[X] This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

[ ] This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").